



Senator Timothy Larson, Co-Chair, Public Safety & Security Committee
Representative Stephen Dargan, Co-Chair, Public Safety & Security Committee
Senator Anthony Guglielmo, Ranking Member, Public Safety & Security Committee
Representative Lezlye Zupkus, Ranking Member, Public Safety & Security Committee
Members of the Public Safety & Security Committee,

My name is Jeffrey Otto, President of QVEC, operator of a large regional PSAP in Northeast Connecticut. We answer 911 calls and dispatch emergency responders in sixteen towns, two boroughs and one fire district comprising thirty-four fire departments and fourteen EMS organizations. We transfer police calls to two police organizations, including one municipal police department and territory covered by two Troops of the Connecticut State Police. We serve a population of 104,000 over 530 square miles and have done so for forty-one years. I appear to urge support for H.B. 6970.

911 calls in Connecticut are received at 104 PSAPs. Of these, seven are Regional Emergency Communications Centers that serve three or more municipalities (these serve 44% of Connecticut's municipalities and 48.7% of its area), and nine are Multitown Dispatch Centers that serve exactly two municipalities. Except for six that are located at State Police barracks that serve high volume highway areas, the remaining eighty-eight PSAPs serve single municipalities, twenty-three of which serve municipalities of 40,000 or more residents. Only twelve per cent of the state's PSAPs handle an average call volume of more than four 911 calls per hour; 51% receive less than one 911 call per hour. Connecticut has the largest number of PSAPs per capita of any state. This embarrassment is not an abstruse fact hidden in the archives of state government. It has been the subject of study by the New England Public Policy Center and the subject of legislative action in 1996, 2004 and 2010. The clear and unmistakable intent of the legislature since 1996 has been that a subsidy program that takes into account the population served, the number of emergency services dispatched, and **the number of municipalities served** should be enacted so as to incentivize consolidation of PSAPs thereby reducing costs and complexity to both the municipalities and the state's government.

The Office of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications, part of DESPP, is the agency responsible for oversight and promotion of 911, and for administration of the subsidy program. It acknowledges the excessive number of small, inefficient PSAPs, many of which are too small to warrant stand-alone facilities. It has for two decades stated that reduction of the number of PSAPs is one of its important objectives. Yet it has failed to provide any prolonged, persistent, continuous or effective effort to encourage the consolidation of redundant PSAPs. This inaction is responsible for millions of dollars of excessive costs that taxpayers have had to support. In 2011 OSET spent nearly \$250,000 of ratepayer's funds for a consultant to develop a rationale and plan for increasing PSAP consolidations. The consultant recommended that OSET consider establishing one, three or five PSAPs to cover the state's needs. It pointed out the financial and operational benefits to radical consolidation, with resulting service improvements being the most important reason for providing additional subsidies to consolidated regional PSAPs. It also suggested imposing sanctions against municipalities that continue to operate PSAPs with call volumes too low to justify stand-alone operations.

After two years of deliberation during which it decided that it should not, could not or would not implement the consultant's main recommendation, OSET has now offered a smoke-screen proposal to restructure the subsidy formula in a fashion contrary to the previously clearly expressed intent of the legislature. This proposal is aimed at eliminating what OSET calls an inequity in subsidy distribution in that the subsidy disbursements are not equal on a per person basis from one PSAP to another. OSET knows full well that the legislative intent of the subsidy program was never to provide equal payments per person, but rather to incentivize consolidation of services by providing larger subsidies to centers that serve more municipalities. In difficult economic times the promise of more subsidy income can alter the otherwise good judgment of municipalities under financial pressure. OSET's proposal thus obscures its ineffectiveness in reducing the excessive numbers of PSAPs and garners the support of financially pressured municipalities who now grab for the subsidy and forget its purpose.

In 2010 the legislature passed P.A.10-125, a Bill that was nearly identical to Raised Bill 6970. Unfortunately, Gov. Rell vetoed it. We encourage the Public Safety and Security Committee to act favorably on this Bill, since it is the only effort proposed by the legislature that will attack the problem of a grossly excessive number of PSAPs in Connecticut. If the agency responsible for encouraging PSAP reduction has been ineffective in this matter for nearly twenty years, the Legislature must take action to effect PSAP reduction. This act also will pave the way for proposals that are under study at the FCC that will attempt to reduce very significantly the number of PSAPs across the nation as NG911 is adopted.

It will also be important, should OSET continue to move forward with its Subsidy Revision Proposal, that Public Safety Committee members act resolutely when the Regulatory Review Committee meets, to prevent adoption of their proposal. Their proposal obfuscates OSET's failure to take constructive action to encourage PSAP consolidation, fails to stem the excessive costs passed on to Connecticut taxpayers, makes no effort to reduce the excessive number of PSAPs in our state, attempts to reduce subsidies to poor towns that did what the state asked over twenty years, increases subsidies to wealthy towns that operate smaller and less efficient PSAPs and obscenely penalizes large municipalities that might attempt to consolidate.

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